

## HB 600

### **AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety Report: Another Look**

Under the auspices of the American Automobile Association (AAA) Foundation for Traffic Safety, a 5-year study was conducted by the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center on the types of driver distractions. Professional crash investigators gathered data at the scene of accidents. They examined the vehicles involved, interviewed the crash victims and witnesses, and evaluated relevant medical records. They found the following percentages of drivers were distracted by the causes listed.

Types of Driver Distractions	
% of Drivers	Cause of Distraction
34.2	Unknown or other
29.4	Outside person, object, or event
11.4	Adjusting the radio, cassette, or compact disc player
10.9	Another occupant
4.3	Moving object in vehicle
2.9	Using other device or object
2.8	Vehicle climate controls
1.7	Eating or drinking
1.5	Using or dialing a cell phone
Source: National Conference of State Legislatures, Along for the Ride: Reducing Driver Distractions, 2002	

**There are, however, several weaknesses inherent in this study.**

- Many people are very reluctant to admit that the cell phone usage contributed to the accident. This concealment may be due, in part, to some negligent drivers believing their culpability is increased if the cell phone usage caused the accident.
- Another weakness is that the data was collected from 1995 to 1999, a period of time in which cell phone usage was far below today's level.

***(See other side)***

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### **Trends in Cell Phone Use**

Cell phone usage has skyrocketed in the United States during the last 25 years. There were only a few thousand cell phones in 1983. According to the Cellular Telecommunications and Internet Association (CTIA), cell phone usage has shown a steady increase as follows:

- 9 million in 1992
- 38 million in 1996
- 97 million in 2000
- 134 million in 2002
- 231 million in 2007

Furthermore, the NHTSA estimates that approximately 73 percent of subscribers use their cell phones while driving.

### **Text Messaging**

Text Messaging, also known as SMS or Short Message Service, is developing very rapidly throughout the world. By mid-2004 texts were being sent at a rate of 500 billion messages per year.

- 32.5 billion SMS messages in United States in first six months of 2005, up 32% from 24.7 billion in last six months of 2004
- 154% growth in monthly Text Messages: 7.3 billion messages in June 2005, up from 2.9 billion messages in June 2004.

The January 2007 survey by the insurer Nationwide found that 19 percent of motorists say they text message while driving.